

**WASHINGTON, D.C.** – The House Natural Resources Subcommittee on Water and Power today held a hearing on Congresswoman Loretta Sanchez’s (CA-47) bill to help improve Orange County’s access to clean, reliable sources of water. H.R. 5039 would authorize \$26 million in federal funding for the expansion of the Orange County Water District’s Groundwater Replenishment System (GWRS), which takes highly treated wastewater and purifies it to levels that meet state and federal drinking water standards.

One of the witnesses at today’s hearing was Orange County Water District Board Member and First Vice President Philip Anthony, who was accompanied by General Manager Michael Markus. At the hearing, Mr. Anthony discussed the importance of GWRS, the largest water purification project of its kind in the world, as well as the growing impact of water shortages in California.

“Currently, about half of Orange County’s water supplies come from outside the county,” Rep. Sanchez said. “Expanding the GWRS will make it possible for our community to produce its own water rather than depend on imported water from Northern California and the Colorado River. If we are to solve California’s water crisis, we must explore all opportunities to expand and create water supplies.”

Specifically, Rep. Sanchez’s bill would amend the Reclamation Wastewater and Groundwater Study and Facilities Act by authorizing the Secretary of the Interior to participate in the planning and construction of the GWRS expansion. The initial GWRS project was similarly authorized and received \$20 million in federal funding to support this critical project which produces 70 million gallons per day, and 72,000 acre-feet of pure water every year – enough to meet the needs of 500,000 Orange County residents. The expansion authorized by Rep. Sanchez’s bill would increase that production capacity by 31,000 acre-feet per year.